FAMOUS OLD PLAYS REANIMATED AS SCREEN DRAMAS

Kate Claxton, Associated for Many Years With "The Two Orphans," Sees the Cinema Reproduction of D'Ennery's Masterpiece

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

POSTERITY is going to be much more fortunate than its predecessors ever were. By the aid of science it is going to have a degree of hindsight almost equal to its crowded present. Everything that has been will evidently be accessible to future generations. Nobody to-day knows how Mario sang. But in three-quarters of a century from date it will be quite possible to listen to Caruso. Just how Malibran sang "Una voce poco fa" nobody alive in the world to-day can tell. But every cadenza uttered in the aria by her great successor Sembrich is preserved for all time.

Not only is the ear indulged in this fashion. There are as interesting survivals for the eye. Fifty years from date there will probably be no living person who can truthfully boast of having seen "The Two Orphans" unless that drama develops still greater vitality and is again put before the public just as it was the other day by the impresario of the Porte St. Martin Theatre, at which the piece was first performed nearly half a century ago. Such an opportunity to hear the play is only a long chance. But it can most certainly and vividly be seen.

Work of the Movies in Part One of Preserving Masterpieces

For this is one of the artistic purposes that the movies are performing. Through this medium the famous old plays of the past will be visible for a long time to come. The public may see them on the screen until the interest in them passes. Scientists may see them for many years to come. The scenes and characters of these old plays are constantly revived for a generation which might never have the opportunity to make the acquaintance of their characters and their scenes. Of course their dialogue is lost to the world. But that privation will be slight. Nobody went to see those old plays when they were in their first freshness for the sake of the words that were going to fall on their ears. It was to be lost in their rapid action that spectators for years flocked to these pieces. The movement of their principal scenes may well be reproduced on the screen.

After he had selected the American by-gosh classic "Way Down East" to immortalize on the screen, D. W. Griffith chose D'Ennery's "The Two Orphans," one of the most famous plays in the world, to rescue from the oblivion into which it was rapidly falling. It has been estimated roughly that Kate Claxton alone played the blind heroine in this country 7,000 times. If the question is put to the actress she quite frankly admits that she hasn't the faintest idea. The record shows that she has played the drama for nearly thirty years. She could never escape from it. The powerful scenes combined with her own famous performance made it necessary for her to return again and again to the drama in order to satisfy the public curiosity to see it. Maybe "Uncle Tom's Cabin" has been as frequently acted. It is an interesting fact that Phillipe D'Ennery, who wrote with Robert Cormon "The Two Orphans," made the French version of the book "La Case d'Oncle Tom" for the stage, which subsequently served as the foundation for the drama in other European countries. D'Ennery had the habit of success as few of his colleagues ever possessed it.

In looking over the list of his plays one is astonished to see the extent to which successes—great successes that were played hundreds and hundreds of times—bristle among them. Any dramatist who could put to his credit "A Celebrated Case," "Belphegor the Mountebank," "Don Cesar de Bazan," "Fanchon," played for years by Maggie Mitchell, and half a dozen others only a little less known, would be an astonishing figure to-day. There are literally a hundred or more compositions attributed to him, which include books for operas, farces, spectacular pieces and fairy plays. After he had apparently reached an age at which he did not need to trouble himself about such things he went to see Jules Verne and proposed to make plays out of the books that were the best sellers after the Franco-Prussian war. Thus began a new series of triumphs for playwright and novelist, which included "Around the World in Eighty Days," "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" and other Verne romances.

D'Ennery Made Popular Successes From First Play to Last

D'Ennery's real name was Phillipe, Adolphe Phillipe. His mother's name was Dennery. So when the young man had conquered in the struggle with his father, who wished his son to become a shopkeeper like him, he decided to use his mother's name. As Dennery therefore he signed his first play. When he had become famous—and that happened very soon—he got permission from the Government of France to sign himself "D'Ennery" although in spite of the apostrophe, the "d" always continued large. He was born on June 17, 1811. He died in 1899. Since "The Two Orphans" was acted at the Porte St. Martin Theatre in 1875, he was only about 65 at the time and not 90 as so many reports have it.

D'Ennery was at once successful. Naturally anybody so popular with the Parisians had to be attacked by the critics. They called poor old D'Ennery all sorts of names. Because the public loved his plays and flocked to hear them he was said to be debauching public taste. He asked Victor Hugo to give him *Don Cesar* out of "Ruy Blas" and he wrote "Don Cesar de Bazan," which is occasionally heard to this day. Theophile Gauthier was a famous critic of the time that made constant warfare on him. But D'Ennery went right on turning out his immensely successful plays. He did not fail of appreciation in some of the most artistic quarters of France. Massenet begged him to make a libretto for him out of Corneille's "Le Cid," and before that time he had prepared texts for Auber and Gounod. There was scarcely a theatre to which he did not have hospitable access. But he triumphed most at the Porte St. Martin. Melodrama was above every other kind of play his strong point. His nephew, Pierre Decourcelle, is a well known French playwright who has followed somewhat modestly in his uncle's footsteps as a writer of melodrama. "Les Deux Gosses" is his best known effort in that direction. Charles Frohman produced it at the Academy of Music as "Two Little Vagrants."

D'Ennery's greatest triumph came, of course, with "The Two Orphans" at the Porte St. Martin in 1875. It travelled rapidly about the civilized world. It was acted at the Union Square Theatre on December 21, 1875. The Union Square had at that time one of the most famous companies in this country. So there were for the new play such actors as Kate Claxton, Kitty Blanchard, Maude Granger, Marie Wilkins, Ida Vernon, Charles Thorne, F. F. Mackey, Charles Parselle, Stuart Robson, McKee Rankin and Fanny Morant. These were great names in their day. The play ran for 180 nights. Its run was ended then because the Union Square Theatre company had to go to Chicago, a programme which could not in those days be changed, since contracts were not so easily altered. The play was revived the following winter, with Sara Jewett as *Henriette* in place of Kitty Blanchard. Later Miss Claxton began her starring tour and Sara Jewett played *Louise*, while Maud Harrison acted *Henriette*. Miss Claxton never meant to play the blind girl on her tour and began in A. E. Lancaster's "Conscience." But the public demand to see D'Ennery's play was too great and she had to revive it. For nearly thirty years it was in her repertoire. Long after its first production "The Two Orphans" was acted at Booth's Theatre here, to receipts for one week of $11,400, which was phenomenal for that time.

The last—probably in reality the last, since the play has passed out of the dramatic mode of the time—revival of "The Two Orphans" was made at the New Amsterdam Theatre on March 28, 1904. Clara Morris made her last appearance on the stage as the nun in that production. Grace George and Margaret Illington were the two sisters, Elita Proctor Otis the hag and Kyrle Bellew the chevalier. The play had such a success on this revival that the company acted it for the whole of the next season over the country. At the first performance Miss Claxton sat in a box.

Kitty Blanchard and Kate Claxton as *The Two Orphans* in the celebrated play of that name.

Charles R. Thorne in his character *The Chevalier* in the great D'Ennery melodrama.

Mr. Griffith, who is using his invariable care in making such pictures, has built an eighteenth century Paris street for the scenes of the play. So there will be all possible realism in the exterior scenes. But whatever he may do to control art Mr. Griffith is not yet great enough as a director to master the forces of nature. It is indispensable that the third act passing in front of Notre Dame should take place in a snow storm. It is not enough in the movies for a stage hand to scatter torn up paper through the air. So the public will not see "The Two Orphans" until there has been a healthy young fall of snow over the Griffith studio in Westchester.

Real Streets and Scenes Being Built for the Movie Version

The director has selected some of his most popular actors for the film, which is to be amplified, of course, in the usual way of the picture play with scenes from the French Revolution, which was just on the point of breaking out when the action of the drama begins. The two sisters are to be mimed by the Gish sisters, Dorothy and Lillian, while Josef Schildkraut will be the chevalier—a much younger one than the public was accustomed to see in the days of the play's popularity. The scissors grinder will be embodied by Frank Puglia, whom Mr. Griffith discovered in the Italian company of Mimi Aguglia. Lucille LaVerne, Katherine Emmet, Sheldon Lewis and Frank Losee will mime the other parts.

Mr. Griffith is not alarmed by the melodramatic character of the piece. But A. M. Palmer was when he first heard of the new play that Hart Jackson had bought for him in Europe.

"You had better take this to Junius Brutus Booth," he is reported to have said. "He likes melodrama and can have it for $1,500, which is the cost of it so far to me."

But Mr. Booth did not want a melodrama that day. So Mr. Palmer read it himself and was profoundly impressed by the pathos and tenderness of some of the scenes, especially between *Henriette*, *Marianne* and the doctor at the Salpetriere.

The woman whose fame is inseparably connected with this play of D'Ennery on the American stage is Kate Claxton. It was not many years ago that a manager in conversation with her asked some questions concerning a revival of the play of which she was ignorant.

"You haven't heard about it?" he said in astonishment. "Why 'The Orphans' are Kate Claxton and Kate Claxton is 'The Orphans'—both of them."

She never was both of them, but she and the play were identified in the minds of theatre goers for nearly a quarter of a century. Other actresses were from time to time seen as the blind girl. Sara Jewett when she was at the height of her popularity essayed the role in a revival made by A. M. Palmer. Nina Varian acted it when the drama was new. But none of them in any degree obliterated the memory of Miss Claxton. She and the play were identified in a way rare when a drama is so uncommonly fine of its kind.

This greatest of all the American *Louises* is to-day a gracious, slim woman who must now be, well, older than the girlish silhouette, the fresh skin and the cheery manner of youth suggest. She lives in comfortable apartments not far from the theatre district. Her life is filled with varied useful interests such as the organizations of her profession may suggest to her, but she is just now pardonably interested more in the making of the cinema of the famous old play than anything else.

"Caruso is gone," she said, with a look of regret, "but his voice is preserved by science in the wonderful records he made. Mr. Griffith is doing the same for some of the notable old plays which are not adapted to the taste of the day. He is preserving them for posterity."

Miss Claxton was a youthful member of the company when Hart Jackson came back from Paris with the manuscript which he had bought from D'Ennery and Cormon. It was submitted to A. M. Palmer, then manager with Sheridan Shook of the Union Square Theatre, in those years at the height of its artistic glory. Mr. Palmer read the play. In spite of its great success in Paris, he pondered. The impatient American owner took the play a block down Broadway to Lester Wallack, who at his theatre on the northeast corner of Broadway and Thirteenth street, had a famous collection of actors. Mr. Wallack also hesitated. With three or four of his leading actors he listened to a reading of the play. Dion Boucicault was there in an advisory capacity.

The dramatist showed approval in his manner after the reading of the first act. The second left him with an expression of uncertainty on his face. He was restless during the reading of the third act, puckered up his lips judiciously and during the reading of the fourth act constantly shifted his position in his chair.

"Never, never," he said springing up when the last word of the famous scene had been read, "will any audience be satisfied with a play in which it is kept waiting for four acts to see the characters that it became acquainted with in the first."

Mr. Wallack abided by the criticism of a famous playwright, manager and actor, for Boucicault was all of these, and "The Two Orphans" went back to Mr. Palmer. This expert testimony must have robbed Mr. Wallack of thousands of dollars.

A. M. Palmer was literally the director of the production, although he had a stage manager to carry into effect his directions. Every night before the rehearsals he studied the manuscript that he was to teach to the actors the next day.

Kate Claxton Tells How "Two Orphans" Was Rehearsed

"The play moved easily for all of us," Miss Claxton said, "for, even if it perhaps ought not to be admitted, such a fine piece of construction always played itself whoever the actors happened to be. They could never quite spoil it. I have seen representations that were not promising, but they always had a certain effectiveness. It was not possible to spoil altogether 'The Two Orphans.'"

Miss Claxton just before the production of the French masterpiece had been a member of Augustin Daly's company. Spencer Houghton Cone, her grandfather, was famous as a Baptist clergyman, writer and actor. He was for a while chaplain of Congress. Miss Claxton had made a great success in Boucicault's "Led Astray," and when it came to the casting of D'Ennery's work the blind heroine went to her.

"Why in the world did Mr. Palmer ever pick you out for *Louise?*" asked the leading actor, Charles Thorne, a famous player in his day. "You'll never consent to wear rags." She had hitherto acted only young women of modish life, and her youthful beauty had been enhanced by her smart frocks.

"But I did wear rags," Miss Claxton said, "and how hard they were to get in those days! Down at the corner of Fourth avenue and Thirteenth street there was an old woman who sold newspapers. In bad weather her daughter tended the stand for her. One week the old woman had come back after a vacation.

"Sell me the clothes your daughter had on last week?" I suddenly asked her after having struggled to get up my courage. "I want to wear them in our new play."

The old woman protested, but after a while gave in. So I had at least some rags to begin with. I patched them out with some others, and my costume for the parts of the play in which I do not wear the Breton dress was ready. How much more easily all that sort of thing is managed to-day. Lillian Gish had a wonderful outfit of rags quite easily prepared for her at the studio. Speaking of dress, Mr. Griffith often shows me the compliment of inviting me to sit next to him during the filming of the scenes. The material of the gown worn by the Countess costs no less than $40 a yard. I expressed my horror at such extravagance. But I learned that Mr. Griffith had his reasons.

He explained that there are no colors for him in the pictures but black and white. But the design of the silk is in such colors that there will be no less than twelve shades of gray ranging from the white to black of the film.

"One night we saw Bronson Howard sitting in a box at the play," Miss Claxton said, "and after the performance he was courteous enough to come on the stage to speak to me. We had been playing all week, with extra matinees to accommodate the crowds. It was Saturday night, and we were exhausted.

"'How in the world,' I asked him, 'can you sit through this play? You must already have seen it often. We were so tired we could scarcely get through.'

"'Why, I've been having the greatest lesson of my life in dramatic construction,' he said. 'The way in which the authors blend four stories, weave one in and out of the others and keep them all the while perfectly distinct is a lesson in stage technique to any dramatist.'"

Miss Claxton says she has no idea how many times she acted the part of the blind girl. For a quarter of a century Miss Claxton played the role. She acted in such other plays as "The Sea of Ice," "The Double Marriage," "The World Against Her" and "Constance." But there was always a demand for the D'Ennery melodrama. "I am always so delighted," Miss Claxton said, "when somebody remembers me in some other role than *Louise*. But that doesn't happen often. I am glad that I have forgotten how often I played the blind girl. It's a good thing not to remember what one has been doing for so long, you know, just as it is not to recall too exactly the years that have passed—to be exact, just how old you are. Don't you agree with me?"

Then Miss Claxton smiled in a way to drive all thoughts of the years from anybody's mind.

Delight of Our Grandfathers in Plays of Their Day May Now Be Shared by the Young of the New Generation

Millions Now Saved by Chemistry

A USE for everything and nothing in the discard is the manufacturers' slogan to-day. There will be shown at the Eighth Coast Artillery Armory this week (September 12-17) at the seventh national exposition of chemical industries what strange anomalies industrial research has disclosed.

A lump of coal may be followed through all its transformations. By distillation it becomes coke, illuminating gas and tar. The latter is further metamorphosed into the murderous gases and high explosives of war, healing antiseptics, disinfectants and medicines to offset its results, and dyestuffs, paint, paving filler, roofing, perfumes and a thousand other products æsthetic or essential to our daily lives.

Artificial Citric Acid Is a Coal Tar Product

Now comes the first coal tar product to be used as an acid, most properly making its debut on that pride of prohibition, the soft drink counter. This is an artificial maleic acid, the substitute for cream of tartar or citric acid which is used for acidifying soft drinks. It is the same acid which is tasted in apples and is much in evidence these hot days where synthetic oranges refresh the parched throats of Manhattanites.

Coal tar, however, is not the only chameleon in our chemical world. Corn cobs will be exhibited in far different realms; both as a cellulose for the absorption of such liquid ingredients as nitroglycerine in the manufacture of dynamite and as a promising raw material for the commercial production of acetic and lactic acid, the latter much in demand for supplying the tart taste to many of the soft drinks on the market. Lactic acid is a normal constituent of milk. It is used in ginger ale and such beverages to a large extent.

From a ton of corn cobs it has been estimated that approximately 300 pounds of acetic and 320 pounds of lactic acid can be produced. Some idea of the possible value of corn cobs may be gathered from the fact that there are produced in the United States alone more than 20,000,000 tons of them annually. Other chemicals of considerable value can therefore be made from cobs which were once considered waste.

While speaking of the effects of prohibition, there is the most interesting product of one time brewers of Golden, Colo., who revamped their beer factories for industrial purposes when the State went dry and now produce a porcelain from their unusual Colorado mud which is as fine an article as can be made anywhere in the world.

Alcohol is of vital importance to many chemical reactions. The first large production of "waterproof" alcohol, guaranteed absolute 100 per cent.—for industrial purposes only—has been put on the market. If you are a manufacturer, you may have a denatured formula to suit your requirements.

The chemist reports that from the juice of imperfect specimens of lemons, culled out as unsalable fruit for such reasons as irregular shape, frost damage, thorn pricks, wind scars, insect marks, excessive scale or any sort of mechanical injury or indication of future decay or imperfection, citric acid is made at the rate of seventy pounds to each ton of fruit. The acid is used in the making of lemonade and other fruit acid drinks which are vended on the streets and also in a wide variety of bottled beverages, baking powders, and in numerous chemical processes.

Hollyhock oil is a new food product which the chemist finds an excellent fare for poultry, while the new sawdust cattle feed produced in a Western State during a terrible drought probably will create a rival to the ostrich and billy goat among the lowing kine. A representative of the Forest Products Laboratory at Madison, Wis., reports that by the use of diluted sulphuric acid afterward neutralized by lime a very satisfactory provender may be made from the waste of the buzzsaw. After the lime and acid have been eliminated there remains a soft branlike food containing about 15 per cent of water and rich in sugars. Three cows at the laboratory took this ligneous diet on trust, believing it to be of grain, and not only did they fatten on it for three months but gave more milk.

The American Peat Society exhibits products from peat. This organic residuum of semi-decomposed leaves, twigs, roots, trunks of trees, shrubs, mosses and other vegetation in areas continually covered or saturated with water, when worked up produces gas, charcoal, coke and innumerable valuable by-products. Peat moss, marsh grass and fibrous peat are employed in the manufacture of surgical dressings, packing material, artificial wood and of substitutes of cotton and woollen cloth. Carpets of unusual texture dyed with peat dye vie with horse blankets and common twine for attention.

While in the United States peat is utilized chiefly as an ingredient of fertilizers, as a conditioner in stock food and as a crop soil; in London Dr. Alice M. Hart has produced from this same boggy mould a rich blue dye. Yellows, browns and grays can also be secured from the same amine or dye base by a certain acid treatment, making inexpensive pigments. So the old bog, long a shunned spot of unhealth, is made to yield food, clothing and beauty.

Mental Test Rouses Many Comments

SO widely has the wave of interest in the test of intelligence submitted by the University of Washington spread in consequence of the publication of this series of questions in a recent issue of THE NEW YORK HERALD this newspaper has received many letters enclosing solutions, letters asking for the correct answers, letters of criticism, &c. Certain of these letters, seeming to contain matter of moment on the subject, have been drawn from in an effort to satisfy this general curiosity. It is obvious that THE HERALD has no right to publish the answers accepted by the university as correct and application for these should be made direct to the university authorities at Seattle.

A writer who signs himself "Unintelligent But Curious," asks pertinent questions about three types of question. The type G problem puzzles him in instances. Type F also affords him ground for criticism. He says:

"The problems under type F present some interesting suggestions to the average unintelligent, like myself. The instructions are specific and unmistakable; if the statement is true, underline 'true' and vice-versa. This statement precludes any liberty of decision that some may be half true and half false, or any other percentage of truth."

He then studies problem No. 90 which is: "Chicago is nearer St. Paul than is Memphis, but farther away than Milwaukee. Therefore Milwaukee is farther from St. Paul than is Memphis."

Of this problem "Unintelligent But Curious" says: "Here we have three alleged statements of fact, one of which is the conclusion. The first statement is correct, the second incorrect and the third, contained in the conclusion incorrect. It does not appear difficult to the average unintelligent to decide that the propounder of this problem was out to catch the victim and that we are only concerned with the truth or falsity of the second sentence and conclusion. Nevertheless, here is a problem that is mathematically two-thirds lie and one-third truth, with the victim only permitted to show his 'intelligence'—really one-third of it—on one, the second lie."

Another is problem No. 176. It reads: Ralph is older than Frank and taller than John; Frank is older than Roy and Roy is shorter than John. Therefore Ralph is the oldest and tallest of the four.

"We learn here these facts," says 'Unintelligent But Curious,' Ralph is older than Frank and Frank is older than Roy, but nothing as to John's position in the age scale. Ralph is taller than John and Roy is shorter than John, but nothing to show that Frank is taller or shorter than Ralph or Roy.

"It is not necessarily true or untrue that Ralph as stated in the conclusion is the oldest and tallest of the four. But to be intelligent one must have known these three interesting gentlemen and be able to state in approximately ten seconds the truth or falsity of the assertion. I feel I am one of at least a few score of the lamentably unintelligent who would like to have an explanation of these problems."

A former public school teacher sends in a sharp criticism of the test, saying, "As a thriller the 'intelligence test' printed in the Magazine of July 17 is a success, but there its value ends. It merely shows that one peculiarly qualified man could answer some or many rather absurd questions very quickly."

He then furnished a test that was administered to a class 8B in public school. The average on this test (it follows) was thirty-eight per cent. Over half of the class succeeded in answering one example correctly in thirty minutes.

1. .79 is what per cent. of .97.
2. .97 is what per cent. of .79.
3. Multiply the sum of these two numbers by their difference.
4. I buy 3 apples for 2 cents and sell 2 for 3 cents. Find the percentage of gain or loss.
5. I borrow $750 to-day. Rate of interest 6 per cent. What must I repay July 5 next?
6. How many gallons in a circular tank, 7 foot diameter, 12 foot high.